**PERSONAL PROFILES**

**1.2 Writing Discussion Groups**

When you see this discussion image, it means you will be sharing your thoughts or writing in pairs (one-one-one) or a small group (about four people). Through “peer review,” we can informally comment in a friendly way as we read one another’s ideas and experiences. As the English university student in the film “Shadowlands” puts it, “We read to know we are not alone.” Peer review also serves as an important, formal aspect of professional writing and research. About two-thirds of your peer feedback and discussion during class will take place in long-term pairs and groups you choose yourselves and the other third in ad-hoc groups I will set up for specific writing and interaction purposes, depending on the focus of instruction for a particular class period. There are many ways writing and feedback can be developed and organized, and other instructors using this book may work out such interaction with you differently. If you are working through this book on your own, see the introduction section for suggestions about ways to maximize opportunities for feedback in your own ways when you see the discussion image and its writing discussion prompts. One important way is by identifying someone as your own “Mo Anam Cara”:



There is an ancient Celtic/Irish tradition called “Mo Anam Cara” or “My Soul Friend,” through which two kindred spirits initiate a friendship, sometimes with their own special kind of ceremony, and then continue it according to their shared interests and personal approaches. I have adapted the idea as a way for students to choose a writing partner to work with on their own time OUTSIDE class meetings. The two of you will share and comment on one another’s ideas and writing. You can decide how and when to meet: face-to-face, email, text, Facebook, tweet, blog, etc. Two famous writers, C. S. Lewis (*The Chronicles of Narnia*) and J. R. R. Tolkien (*The* *Lord of the Rings*) met with a small group of other university friends at a pub called “The Bird and the Baby,” in Oxford, England to read and comment on one another’s stories and also just to have a good time together. They dubbed their group, “The Inklings.” In a similar fashion, I would like you to keep track of the activities of your pen-friend(s) in a notebook or journal of your own style or format, and I will ask you for updates from time to time throughout the course.

**1.3 My Lists**

A good place to start developing your own personal profile is by writing a brief first draft (first effort to go from words and thoughts to sentences) as you remember special details about yourself, events, places, and people you’ve encountered along the way. Let’s call it your “My I List,” but we’ll simplify by combining with the words/sounds and just call it “My List.” There are two simple rules: 1) Write about 10 sentences. 2) Begin each sentence with “My” or “I.” But before you write your own, on the next page is an example for you to read and analyze:

My List

1-My name is Beatriz Rayo Chao.

2- I’m 18 years old.

3- My home town is Cuauhtémoc, named after our bravest Mexica leader, who refused to surrender even when the invading Spaniards tortured him by burning his feet.

4-I went to the capital of my state, Chihuahua, to study classical guitar.

5-I lived in an internado, a place where you can get room and board while attending school.

6-I took care of the internado rabbits to pay for my dormitory room.

7-I have the nickname China because I look like my Chinese mom whose surname is Chao.

8-I like my dad’s surname, Rayo, because it means “thunderbolt.”

9-I have three brothers and one sister: Juan, Victor, Bruz, and Ramona.

10-I love to drink what we call “agua,” meaning “water,” but we flavor it with mango, watermelon, or other juices.

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**1.4 Notebook: a place for collecting, drafting, and reader-response**

Throughout this course, you will be recording your thoughts and writing in a notebook. This notebook will also be directly connected with our discussion interaction because after you’ve brainstormed, analyzed, and practiced writing something, I will also often suggest ways to show your work or talk with a partner or small group of classmates. Your notebook can be any size or shape, paper or digital. Use it to keep your class notes, reader-response analysis and feedback, in-class practice writing, drafts of the required papers for this class, and anything else you might like to use it for. Instead of a final exam, you will create an edited version of the notebook you’ve kept throughout the semester and show it to me and the rest of the class in whatever format you choose: paper or digital. One pleasure that comes from doing something creative is finding out how someone else “reads” or responds to what we’ve created. Let’s begin by writing in your notebook (paper or digital), a brief conversational-style paragraph telling Beatriz what you’ve learned about her based on her “My List.” As you respond, include in your paragraph questions you might want to ask or connected personal information and experiences of your own. Here are the notes of one student who offered Beatriz feedback:

At first, I thought “Rayo” was your middle name, but then I found out that you have two last names. Is that something cultural in your country? My parents gave me two given names: Robert and a middle name, Victor. I decided I liked my middle name better so everyone calls me Victor, or just Vic. So I have the same name as your brother. Also, guess what? We’re the same age: 18. How interesting about the background of your home town! Can you tell me more?



I will pair you up with a classmate after you’ve finished so that you can read your paragraphs about Beatriz to each other.

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By now, you’ve seen how descriptive details and interesting facts help to “round out” how aspects of a person’s life are portrayed. E. M. Forster drew a famous distinction between what he called “flat” and “round” characters, the round ones more alive and interesting. Forster was also a master at composing libretto (little book), notes on the details and research which guide the performance of a play or opera. So back to your notebook. This is the place (or places) where you will store up ideas and drafts of your writing you’re working on. Write your own 10-sentence My List introducing and describing yourself.

When you finish, pair up with the same classmate as before and do the following: 1) Take turns reading your My List to each other; 2) Ask follow-up questions about your lists and explore in more detail your interests and experiences (just as you responded to Beatriz’s list). After about 10 minutes, I’ll have you switch partners and get to know another classmate: follow the same two steps above in your new conversation together.